

ARH 3653: Mesoamerican Art

Derek Burdette, Ph.D., Assistant Professor

University of Florida, Fall Semester, August 20–December 4, 2019 (3 credit hours)

Tuesdays Period 5 (11:45–12:35) and Thursdays Periods 5-6 (11:45–1:40) in FAC 201

Final exam: Thursday, December 12 from 3:00- 5:00pm

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Office: Fine Arts C 103 Office hours: Tuesday's Periods 6-7 (12:50- 2:45)

Course Description

This course examines the art and architecture of ancient Mesoamerica from 1500 BCE (before common era) to about 1550 CE. We will examine how artworks and architectural monuments from Mesoamerica reflected, supported, and actively shaped the worldview of the people who created and used them. To better understand the cultural and social significance of the artworks we study, we will look to a variety of disciplinary approaches to the art and architecture of the region (ie, art history, archeology, anthropology, ethnography). In addition, the class will examine the significance of Mesoamerican art today, including the historiography of how it has been studied and the lasting legacy of Mesoamerican visual culture across the Americas.

Expected Learning Outcomes

- Comprehend the cultural diversity of Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica and recognize its shared features.
- Recognize, interpret, and analyze art and architecture from the major Mesoamerican cultures based on comprehension of Mesoamerican worldviews and visual systems.
- Comprehend the historiography of the region—that is, the history of the discovery, decipherment, and display of Mesoamerican art.
- Compare Mesoamerican worldviews with those of our modern-day culture.
- Learn how U.S. scholarship and tourism have affected Mesoamerican cultural heritage, and recognize how Mesoamerican art has entered U.S. visual culture.
- Improve writing skills by completing a research paper, receiving instructor feedback and rewriting if necessary.

Assigned Reading

We have two required textbooks for this class. They are:

- Miller, Mary Ellen. *The Art of Mesoamerica from Olmec to Aztec*. 5th edition. London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2012. **Required.**
- Miller, Mary Ellen and Karl Taube. *An Illustrated Dictionary of the Gods and Symbols of Ancient Mexico and the Maya*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997. **Required.**

Copies of these books will be on **reserve** in the Fine Arts Library. Other required readings are available as pdf's on the **Canvas (E-learning)** site for the course, under Files or in the weekly

modules. Additional class materials, including a copy of this syllabus, terms lists, and images, will also be posted there.

Requirements and Grading:

Requirements:

All students must:

- (1) attend class (see attendance policy below)
- (2) complete assigned readings *before* the classes for which they are assigned
- (3) participate in class discussions and activities
- (4) complete homework assignments, including reading analysis and popular media project
- (5) write a research paper (2000 words) investigating the significance of a single Mesoamerican artwork
- (6) Attend and complete the in-class midterm and final examinations.

Grade Break Down:

- 10% Attendance and Participation
- 15% Assignments
- 25% Research Paper Assignment
- 25% Midterm Exam
- 25% Final Exam

Attendance and Participation (10%): Attendance is extremely important for this class, as many of our learning outcomes can only be achieved by attending class and participating fully in the lecture and discussion. We will circulate a sign-in sheet each day in class. You will be allowed **THREE** un-penalized absences, which assumes that you will need a day here or there because you are sick, etc. For each subsequent absence you will lose 2 points from the “Attendance and Participation” portion of your final grade. Note that this system doesn't distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so plan accordingly. (Note that in certain cases- eg. serious illness- absences can be excused with proper documentation; Also, note that excessive absences are grounds for receiving a failing grade for the class, and failure to sign in (if you are late, for example) will be counted as an absence.)

Assignments (15%):

Reading Analysis Assignments (3 x 3%: 9%):

In preparation for class discussion on THREE days you will complete a two-page analysis worksheet for our assigned reading. These short assignments are designed to help you learn to read critically and engage with diverse approaches to artworks and visual culture. Your goal is to read the article with an eye toward the author's approach, use of evidence, and main thesis or idea. These worksheets will help you to develop the skills required to engage with scholarly material, read critically, and identify strong organization and argumentation. The RAA's will be discussed in-depth during class, but they should be completed *before* the start of class on the day indicated (when we cover the material in lecture) and uploaded to canvas. No late assignments will be accepted.

Dates Reading Analysis Due:

Week 5: Thursday, Sept. 19 (Mandell, "A New Analysis of Gender")

Week 8: Thursday, October 10 (Schele and Friedel, "The Children of the First Mother")

Week 11: Thursday, October (Matos Moctezuma, "Symbolism of the Templo Mayor")

Mesoamerica in Popular Media Project (6%):

Over the course of the semester we will all learn a lot about Mesoamerican art traditions and your new knowledge (and attentiveness) will help you begin to notice Mesoamerican art all around us. It is in films, cartoons, advertising, mural paintings and architecture. This project will require you to select a single element of Mesoamerican art that has been "deployed" in another context and to analyze both its original meaning as well as its new significance. You will try to answer the questions: why was this element selected, and what meaning does it now hold for those who made it or view it? What are the implications of its re-contextualization? Your research will culminate in presentations during the last days of class. More information on this assignment, including detailed requirements and a rubric, will be forthcoming.

Final Research Paper Assignment (25%):

Each of you will select a single artwork rooted in a topic/culture/theme we touch upon in class and write a research paper that both situates that artwork within the field of Mesoamerican art history and advances an argument about the artwork. Papers should be 2,000- 2,500 words (8-10 pages) in length (2x spaced, times new roman, normal margins). The assignment will be completed in several steps:

1. You will turn in a **proposal of your topic and short, preliminary bibliography** on Thursday Sept. 26 (week 6)
2. The **final paper** will be due on Thursday Nov 21st (week 14).
3. Papers will be returned by the last day of class Dec. 4th (week 16), to allow final **re-writes** of the paper (if you choose to do so).

The Writing Requirement

This course is designed to fulfill the 2000-word UF Writing Requirement (E2). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades now have two components: to receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Each writing assignment will be graded following a rubric that values the essay's organizational structure, including its thesis, body, conclusion, and bibliography. Points will be assigned for these elements as well as proper support of the thesis, overall clarity, proper citation of sources, and correct style (punctuation, spelling, grammar, syntax). Written assignments will be returned prior to the last class meeting with instructor feedback, and students receiving a grade of C or below will have the option to rewrite in response to the feedback. A couple of writing tips:

- For assistance with writing, students can find help at the Writing Studio: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Since the Chicago Manual of Style is preferred for art history, this style guide is recommended: <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

Midterm (25%)/ Final Exam (25%):

These exams are designed to evaluate your understanding of the big themes and issues raised in class, as well as the basic facts, concepts and historical realities we have learned about. At the end of each week, I will post the lectures and key artworks from that week on canvas, and you can use those powerpoints as a guide for preparing for the test. That being said, the majority of the material on the exam will be delivered through lecture and class discussion- and so there is no substitute for attending class and taking thorough notes. The tests will include a combination of image-based short answer questions (requiring you to identify the image, talk about its content, and connect it to key themes and issues discussed in class) and brief essays addressing larger themes that connect material from multiple sections of class. The tests will be offered only during the scheduled time, and absence may only be excused by a doctor's note.

Note that for both the midterm and final, you will be required to complete a brief review assignment that is due in class the day before the exam period (Midterm- Tuesday, October 1; Final- Tuesday, December 4). Those assignments will constitute part of your exam grade.

Grading Scale

Grades are tabulated on a 100-point scale and a letter grade is assigned as follows:

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87–89 B+	84–86 B	80–83 B-
77–79 C+	74–76 C	70–73 C-
67–69 D+	64–66 D	60–63 D-
59 and below F		

If you have questions about how grade points are assigned by the University, go to:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Reminders and Requirements

UF Requirements and Policy: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Statement Regarding the Honor Pledge: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either

required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Accommodations: I, along with the rest of the University community, am working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation as soon as possible, and we can work to find a solution. Note that students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Diversity Statement: The intent is that we explore the content of this course in a way that is respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, ability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. The intent is also to present content that explores diverse points of view, which might be challenging. Maintaining a respectful environment will be our responsibility. The intent is that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated.

Changes to the Syllabus: While this document provides guidelines for the class, I do reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester if the need arises. Each class is different, and sometimes it takes some tweaking to get the right readings, topics, and assignments. Being flexible with the syllabus allows us to get it right.

Notes on Technology and Communication

- **Communication and Respect:** We all must strive to be good communicators to make this class successful. This means listening respectfully to others in class (faculty and students) and engaging in respectful conversation. It also, perhaps just as importantly, means maintaining professional standards while communicating via email and outside of class. With that in mind, please use formal, respectful, and professional standards when corresponding via email. This means beginning emails with a formal greeting, employing proper grammar, and avoiding unprofessional colloquialisms.
- **Laptop computers:** We will have a laptop free classroom this term. In a small class like this, I prefer that we all use notebooks rather than laptops because this allows us to engage without distractions or barriers. If you know that computers are required for you to achieve the learning outcomes, please come speak to me in week one about accommodations.

- **Cell Phones:** Please refrain from texting during class. If it becomes a problem, I will simply ask you to put your phone away. If it happens repeatedly, I will ask you nicely to leave class and mark you absent for the day.
- **Canvas:** Please make sure that you are familiar with our course site on Canvas so that you will have access to announcements, assignments and readings, and pptx presentations and study guides.
- **Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction and Mesoamerica

T August 20: Introduction to the Course

TR August 22: Intro to Looking at (Pre-Columbian) Art

- Miller, Ch. 1 "Introduction" (p.7-23)
- Pasztory. "Aesthetics and pre-Columbian art"

Week 2: The Formative Period: The Olmec – Portraits and Origin Stories

T August 27: The Olmecs: San Lorenzo and La Venta and Ruler

- Miller, Ch. 2, "The Olmecs."

TR August 29: Olmec Art cont.

Week 3: The Formative Period: Maya Calendar, Glyphs and Pyramids

T September 3: Hieroglyphs and the Mesoamerican Calendar

- Miller "Ch. 3: The Late Formative- *Writing and Calendrical Systems*" (p 48-58)

TR September 5: The Early Maya

- Miller "Ch 3: The Late Formative- *The Maya Region*" (p.68- 77)
- William A. Saturno, Karl A. Taube & David Stuart, "The Murals of San Bartolo, El Petén, Guatemala, Part 1: The North Wall," *Ancient America* No. 7, pp. 1–71.

Week 4: Teotihuacan: A Mesoamerican Metropole

T September 10: Teotihuacan: The City and the Pyramids

- Miller, Ch. 4 "Teotihuacan: *Intro and Architecture*" (p. 78- 89)

- Annabeth Headrick, Ch. 1, "Approaching the City," in *The Teotihuacan Trinity: The Sociopolitical Structure of an Ancient Mesoamerican City*, pp. 1–22. Canvas.
- Selection, "Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire," 2017.

TR September 12: The Citadel, the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpents and Politics

Week 5: Teotihuacan Continued: Monuments, Murals and Masks

T September 17: Murals, Apartments and the Making of a Metropolis

- Miller, "Ch. 4 "Teotihuacan: *Sculpture and Painting and The End...*"(p.90- 105)
- Pazstory's "Teotihuacan Unmasked: A View through Art"

TR September 19: The "Great Goddess" – An Evolving Interpretive Case Study

- **RAA DUE.** Elisa Mandell, "A New Analysis of the Gender Attribution of the "Great Goddess" of Teotihuacan," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 26:1, March 2015, pp. 29–49. Canvas. For discussion Thursday.
- Selection, "Teotihuacan: City of Water, City of Fire," 2017.

Week 6: Monte Albán (Oaxaca) and el Tajín (Veracruz)

T September 24: Monte Albán and Burial Arts

- Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, Ch. 3, "The Late Formative," only pp. 58–68, and Ch. 5, "Monte Alban, Veracruz and Cotzumalhuapa"
- Judy Sund, "Beyond the Grave: The Twentieth-Century Afterlife of West Mexican Burial Effigies" *Art Bulletin* 82:4 (December 2000): 734-67. Canvas. For discussion Thursday.

TR September 26: El Tajin and the Ballgame in Mesoamerica

- **Paper Topic Due**

Week 7: Midterm Exam

T October 1: Midterm Review

- **Review Assignment due in class**

TR October 3: Midterm Exam in Class

Week 8: The Classic Maya: Cities and Kingship

T October 8: Classic Maya "Centers" Emerge

- Miller, "Ch 6: The Early Classic Maya" (p.128- 151)
- Miller and O'Neil, "Early Classic Sculpture at Tikal," 116- 126.
- Stuart & Stuart, *Palenque*, Selections

TR October 10: Palenque: Splendors of a Maya Royal Court

- Miller, Ch. 7, "Classic Maya" (p.153- 160)
- **RAA DUE.** Schele and Friedel, "The Children of the First Mother" (216-237)

Week 9: Classic Maya: Ceramics and Mural Traditions

T October 15: Small Scale Sculpture and Ceramics

- Miller, Ch. 7 "Classic Maya- *Figurines and Ceramics*," (p. 190- 198)
- Coe, *The Art of the Maya Scribe* (selection)

TR October 17: Visit to the Harn Museum

Week 10: The Post-Classic- Tula and Chichén Itza

T October 22: Yaxchilan and Bonampak: Warfare and Collapse

- Miller and Brittenham, *The Spectacle of the Late Maya Court* (selection)

TR October 24: The Toltecs of Tula and Chichén Itza

- Miller, *Art of Mesoamerica*, Ch. 8, "Mesoamerica after the Fall of Classic Cities."

Week 11: The Aztecs: Tenochtitlan and the Templo Mayor

T October 29: The Aztecs and Tenochtitlan

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Aztec history*" (p.238- 250)

TR October 31: The Templo Mayor and the Living Myth

- **RAA DUE**: Matos Moctezuma's "Symbolism of the Templo Mayor"

Week 12: Manuscripts and Picture-Writing

T November 5: Aztec Writing Systems and Manuscripts

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Manuscripts*" (p.267- 272)
- Elizabeth Boone, "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge," in *Writing Without Words*, 3-26.

TR November 7: Manuscripts Continued

- Bring Birthdate Information from Aztec calendar for divination

Week 13: Aztec Monumental Sculptures

T November 12: Monuments to the Tlatoani: The Solar Disks and the Teocalli

- Miller, Ch. 9, "The Aztecs- *Sculpture*" (p.254- 259)
- Umberger, "Art and Imperial Strategy in Tenochtitlan," 85-108.

TR November 14: The Aztec Calendar Stone

- NOTE: Class held at replica on UF campus
- Villela, Robb and Miller, "Introduction," in *The Aztec Calendar Stone*, 1-41.

Week 14: The Legacy of Mesoamerica After 1492

T November 19: Aztec Art After the Conquest

- Boone, "Pictorial Documents and Visual Thinking in Postconquest Mexico" in *Native Traditions in a Postconquest World*, 149- 199.
- *The Aztec World*, ch. 12, Matos Moctezuma "The Aztec World's Presence in Colonial and

Modern Mexico." 209-240.

TR November 21: In Class Presentations, Day 1

- **Research Paper Due**

Week 15:

T November 26: In Class Presentations, Day 2

TR November 28: No Class

Week 16: Exam Review

T December 4: Final Exam Review

- **Review Assignment due in class**

- **Research Paper Handed Back**

FINAL EXAM: Thursday December 12, 3:00- 5:00pm